THE CONNECTION

WINTER 2003

Inside:

If you have questions or comments on any information contained in *The Connection*, please contact Vivian Pendleton at (360) 664-7654 or email: **vivian.pendleton@ofm.wa.gov**

Just Approved!

The Human Resource Feasibility Study Recommendation

On January 10, 2003, the Information Services Board approved the recommendation to pursue a commercial software package. This package will replace the existing personnel and payroll systems in order to meet requirements set forth in the Civil Service Reform Act of 2002.

Next Steps

The Department of Personnel and Office of Financial Management will move forward with the next phase of the project. Over the next six months, the Department of Personnel will:

- Select the quality assurance provider,
- Secure a package selection consultant,
- Refine information requirements and issue an RFP,
- Obtain Legislative authorization, then
- Evaluate and select the software package and implementation contractor.

The current plan calls for implementation of the new system by July 2005.

For additional information on the *HR Feasibility Study* and the *Next Steps*, please contact Doug Tanabe at dougt@dop.wa.gov / (360) 664-6360.

Opportunity to Demo New FASTRACK System
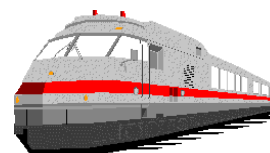
The Office of Financial Management will be offering three-hour information sessions in Spokane, Yakima, Seattle and Tumwater during January 2003 to provide Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) staff with the opportunity to preview their new FASTRACK system and give feedback to the project team.

These sessions are designed to facilitate a smooth transition to FASTRACK and to illustrate its various capabilities. Participants will receive background information on the Financial Reporting Improvement Project (FRIP), an overview of FASTRACK infrastructure and technology, and a demonstration.

A question and answer period will follow the sessions wherein participants will be encouraged to ask questions and share comments with the FRIP team.

Accounting Division

OFFICE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
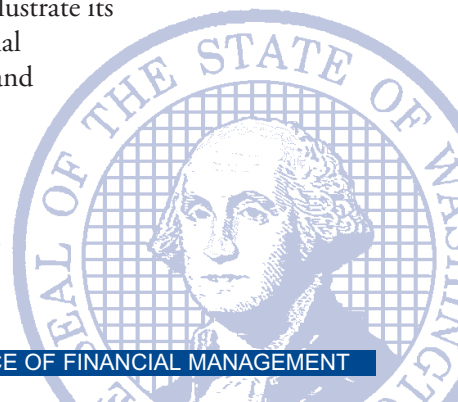
Sadie Rodriguez-Hawkins
Assistant Director, OFM Accounting

Comments from the Assistant Director

Sadie Rodriguez-Hawkins

I am enthused, excited and grateful for the efforts I see being put forth by so many dedicated state employees. In response to the current budget crisis, employees are using their creativity to help cut costs, eliminate redundancies, redistribute workloads, make systems better and easier to use, and the list goes on.

In this issue of *The Connection* you will read about products that are *new* or *improved*. Webster defines the term *new* as something recent, never used before, modern, or unfamiliar. *Improved* is defined as advanced to a better quality or state, as increased productivity or value of, and to become or get better. Here are some prime examples:

- The Office of Financial Management (OFM) recently launched a newly designed and reorganized website. Feedback from agencies regarding the ease of navigation and usability of the site has been quite positive.

- A new version of the 2002 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) has incorporated the standards required by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board.

- OFM is getting ready to release the biggest change to AFRS data files in over ten years.

- The core release of the new Salary Projection System is slated for June 2003. This change is one many have waited for with great anticipation.

- The Department of Social and Health Services will shift from its current internal reporting system to FASTRACK on July 1, 2003. Personnel will preview their new system over the next several weeks.

- Now agencies that receive payments to more than one fund can credit the payments using up to five funds concurrently with the Inter-Agency Payment (IAP) process.

- The Travel Voucher System has implemented a new, simplified monthly rate.

We hope that you are as excited as we are about all the "new and improved" products being provided to ease your workloads, and welcome your comments on how to make them even better.

There is a wonderful thing about human nature that keeps us striving to make things better. It is this very quality that makes working in state government such a rewarding experience.

Here's wishing you and yours a very Happy and Prosperous New Year!

Electronic Payment Gets Easier

Biggest Change to AFRS Data Files In Over Ten Years
Stuffing billing statements into payment envelopes, and/or answering questions from vendors about "What was this payment for?" will be a thing of the past! The AFRS Payment Improvement Project will soon make electronic payments to agency vendors easier.

As a result of your requests, the AFRS Team is adding an expanded Invoice Number, an Invoice Date and Account Number to AFRS, so that this information may be automatically passed on to vendors via the remittance advice. To minimize the impact on customers, the changes will be implemented in several incremental releases.

Release One
The first release, targeted for completion by April of 2003, will include changes to all AFRS input screens and processes to accommodate the changed and added fields. The re-design of the entry screens was accomplished with input from the newly formed AFRS Users Group. At the same time we will begin accepting expanded interface records containing the affected fields.

For those agencies that provide payment interface files to AFRS, a new record layout will be supplied and the Batch Interface Instructions will be revised. Agencies **will NOT** be required to change their interfaces at this time, but are strongly encouraged to consider converting their payment interfaces to make use of this opportunity to provide improved payment information to their vendors.

Any questions regarding this expansion should be directed to Mike Contris at mike.contris@ofm.wa.gov / (360) 664-7687.

Additions
- Expanded Invoice Number
- Invoice Date
- Account Number

Results
- Reduced Payment Cost
- Better Controls
- Faster Payments
- Reduced Effort

OFM Services in One Click

In November 2002, the Office of Financial Management (OFM) launched its newly designed and re-organized website located at **www.ofm.wa.gov**. The site provides citizens with better access to state information and fiscal services including Washington population figures, economic and fiscal research, and budget, policy and accounting information.

Visitors to the OFM site generally are looking for a specific service. The new navigation is activity-based and allows users to access OFM's most popular services with a single click.

"This new website improves OFM's ability to serve the public, the Legislature and state agencies," said Marty Brown, OFM director.

Demo New FASTRACK System

Additional system requirements will be collected during this time to supplement existing requirements previously gathered from customer groups. DSHS will shift from its current internal financial reporting system to the new system on July 1, 2003.

DSHS staff who access AFRS financial data for reporting and analysis, as well as those who are interested in learning about FASTRACK's capabilities, are invited to attend these sessions. To sign up, please click the link to the OFM training site at http://www.ofm.wa.gov/training.htm.

For additional information please contact FRIP Product Managers Jane Chapman or Esther Fredson at the FRIP Help Line – 360-664-7765 / FRIPHelp@ofm.wa.gov. Or visit the website at http://198.238.138.4/frip/.

The Enterprise Strategies Committee

Focused, Working Hard And Achieving Results

In Accomplishing The Enterprise Vision

The Enterprise Strategies Committee (ESC) continues its efforts *to improve core financial and administrative processes in state government* by

- Developing transition initiatives to bridge the gap between the current environment and the Enterprise Vision for statewide financial and administrative systems,
- Monitoring the HR Feasibility Study and Civil Service Reform implementation projects,
- Guiding agencies initiatives in order to foster enterprise-wide solutions, and
- Monitoring agencies adoption of Best Practices.

ESC updates will soon be available at www.ofm.wa.gov.

Until then, please contact Susan Dodson at susan.dodson@ofm.wa.gov / 360-664-7689 for more detailed information.

AFRS User Documentation

We've Got Your Link

Statewide Financial Systems is pleased to announce that all of our AFRS User Documentation is now available online. The site includes rate information for the 2003-05 Biennium, as well as a link to our Internet Home Page. To check it out, simply logon to http://swfs.ofm.wa.gov/default.asp.

For additional information or assistance, please contact Betty Robertson at betty.robertson@ofm.wa.gov / (360) 664-7653.

A New and Different CAFR

In December 2002, the Office of Financial Management published a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) with a brand new look.

Utilizing new reporting standards, the 2002 CAFR presents financial reports that enhance the state's accountability and are easier to read and understand.

So, what's new in the Fiscal Year 2002 CAFR?

- *Two comprehensive, government-wide statements*, The Statement of Net Assets and the Statement of Activities, that present a consolidated view of state government finances, including the year's operating results.

- *New Management Discussion and Analysis* (**MD&A**), that provides the basic financial statements with an accompanying narrative introduction, overview, and analysis of those statements.
  Like Required Supplementary Information itself, the concept of MD&A originated in the private sector, where the Securities and Exchange Commission has long required MD&A in connection with the financial reports of publicly traded companies.

- *Important Highway Infrastructure information* including the condition of Washington's public roads, bridges and airfields, and a comparison of the budget to actual preservation and maintenance costs.
  This information could be used to answer questions like, "How much money is spent each year to preserve and maintain Washington's roads?"

The 2002 CAFR marks the culmination of a three-year effort to transition to the new reporting standards required by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board.

Our thanks to all who contributed during this implementation, the fiscal year closing process and throughout the year.

The CAFR is the result of a great deal of hard work by fiscal personnel throughout the state. We invite you to view the online version* at http://www.ofm.wa.gov/accounting/financial.htm.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Wendy Jarrett at Wendy.Jarrett@ofm.wa.gov / (360) 664-7675.

* Due to budget constraints, the number of printed copies has been reduced significantly.

IAP Just Got Better!

Paying other agencies used to be a hassle but, with IAP, the process is a breeze. So many agencies have told us how much they like and appreciate the AFRS Inter-Agency Payment (IAP) feature, because it streamlines the voucher process and eliminates the need for paper forms. The transactions automatically clear the in-process account and, best of all, you don't have to do anything special to use the features.

We've added a new feature

Agencies that receive payments into more than one fund can now use the IAP process to allow the billing agencies to receive and credit the payments using up to five funds at the same time.

How does it work?

A new table (TM.B, agency maintained) that identifies the payment distribution has been created. This table can accommodate up to five funds. The Statewide Vendor table now has a field that will link the vendors to these multiple funds. The email to recipients of this type of IAP payment will list all transactions by fund.

You can sign up as a multi-fund vendor agency, if 1) payments received from other agencies are deposited into more than one fund and 2) the payment distribution is a percentage (%) of the total invoice/amount.

To sign up for the new IAP feature, please contact Marilei Amurao-Tabile at marilei@ofm.wa.gov / (360) 664-7761.

Travel Policy Update – POV Mileage

The federal privately owned vehicle (POV) reimbursement rate changed effective January 1, 2003. However, the state's POV reimbursement rate will remain at $0.345 into calendar year 2003.

If you have questions or comments, please contact Andrea Brown at Andrea.Brown@ofm.wa.gov / (360) 664-7773 or the Statewide Accounting Consultant assigned to your agency.

Latest Audit Resolution Report – Ready for Viewing

The Audit Resolution Report was issued to the Legislature in December 2002.

This report summarizes the status of resolution of 45 audit exceptions for 22 agencies, from December 1, 2001, through November 30, 2002.

Included in this report are exceptions noted in the Statewide Accountability Report, the federally mandated State-wide Single Audit, and regularly scheduled audits for Higher Education.

We invite you to view the Audit Resolution Report at http://www.ofm.wa.gov/reports/reports.htm.

If you have any questions, please contact the State Financial Consultant assigned to your agency.

The *Travel Voucher System*
•••••••••••••••••••••••••• ● Just Got *KISSed*

WITH A KEEP IT SIMPLE SYSTEM

In an effort to encourage agencies to begin using the *Travel Voucher System* as one of the Governor's 'Best Practices', OFM has implemented a new, simplified monthly rate structure.

Effective January 1, 2003, agencies will be charged a flat rate of $4.50 per voucher. The old rate structure of $1.00 per voucher, plus a monthly subscription fee, no longer applies. This new rate structure will make startups more cost effective and savings easier to estimate and control.

To find out how your agency can *KISS* your Travel Voucher headaches good-bye, contact Owen Barbeau at owen.barbeau@ofm.wa.gov / (360) 664-7766.

Travel Voucher System
OFFICE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Who's New?

in Accounting

Sharlene McGrath joined the OFM Statewide Financial Systems BASS Team in October 2002. She is on a nine-month temporary assignment as a Tester for the Salary Projection System (SPS). Her years of experience working as a Budget Program Specialist, most recently with the Department of Retirement Systems, will help to support the business requirements for SPS.

In her spare time, Sharlene enjoys running, biking, weight lifting, hiking, boating, dancing, and spending time with her one-year-old grandson.

Sharlene can be reached at sharlene.mcgrath@ofm.wa.gov / 360-725-5275.

Jack Wittenborn joined OFM on December 16, 2002, as a QA Tester for the Mainframe Development Group of Statewide Financial Systems. Prior to coming to OFM, he spent five years as a Code Developer in DSHS' Human Resources Information Systems Division.

Jack, retired from the Air Force, enjoys helping people. He is an active member of the Tumwater Lions International Club and currently serves as Zone Chairman for the West Olympia, Shelton and Hoodsport clubs. Jack and his wife Kay have two grown children and four grandchildren.

Jack can be reached at jack.wittenborn@ofm.wa.gov / 360-664-7679.

The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra effort.
                    -Anonymous

BASS Notes

Using Microsoft .NET Technology

The core release of the new Salary Projection System (SPS), the replacement for the mainframe-based BPS1, is slated for production in June 2003.

In order to simplify application deployment while continuing to deliver a rich client interface to our customers, BASS is building SPS using Microsoft .NET technology.

This will require a free download of the .NET Framework from Microsoft to each SPS customer workstation.

Who will be affected?
The only agencies affected will be those planning to use SPS.

An email was sent to BASS users in November 2002 that:

1) Detailed the minimum client requirements for running applications on the .NET Framework,

2) Asked for feedback on any issues the agencies might foresee with the download, and

3) Requested a contact person from each agency to help with the actual testing some time in January 2003.

For more information regarding the download of the Microsoft .NET Framework to customer workstations, please contact Sharon Novak at sharon.novak@ofm.wa.gov / 360-725-5270.